Transforming in Peace and War

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A STRYKER BRIGADE company commander conducts an urban counter-ambush against an insurgent cell and gains valuable intelligence from the insurgents he detains. This intelligence is rapidly evaluated and analyzed through internal capabilities and reachback to intelligence agencies in the United States. Within hours, the company is conducting a rapid series of raids using advanced digital capabilities, tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), fast and quiet Strykers, organic snipers, squad-designated marksmen, and lethal infantrymen. Within a few more hours, this agile, adaptive company, keeping pace with constant changes on the battlefield, detains 8 of 10 insurgent cell members.

We could never have predicted the incredible agility and adaptability required of the combat missions young soldiers now face on the battlefield in Iraq, but leaders at all levels are conducting difficult missions with minimal guidance. They are demonstrating agility beyond all expectations and are having an incredible effect on missions as varied as election support, complex information operations, and conducting multiple raids with special operations forces—all in a single night.

Material lessons learned have been documented extremely well throughout the Stryker Brigade Combat Team's (SBCT's) development, but material lessons are easier to capture and address than nonmaterial lessons learned, which are much more difficult to quantify. The complex issues of how training has changed, the required mindset changes, and the institutional changes required to truly transform are harder to address. Training a soldier on a new vehicle such as the Stryker is easy, but teaching soldiers and leaders to think differently and change training methods they have used for many years is difficult.

Institutional modifications must occur to allow leaders to properly train their units for the complex battlefield they will face. The institutional changes are the toughest to implement and can bring a battalion or brigade staff to its knees if the Army does not significantly reduce its bureaucracies at all levels. Garrison organizations such as Range Control, training aids support centers, simulation centers, and ammunition supply cling to procedures that impede Transformation and the ability to truly train the way we will fight.

A New Level of Responsibility

SBCT transformation requires a new method for fighting the enemy. By using the organization's digital strengths; combined arms capabilities down to the platoon level; and available intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance assets, it is possible to fight the enemy differently than before. The SBCTs train to see first, understand first, act first, and finish decisively.

Multiple combat training center (CTC) rotations and field exercises revealed that seeing the enemy first was not a challenge. But understanding the incredibly large amounts of information received is. Staff officers provide the commander with an overwhelming amount of information unless they have learned to analyze the information at a skills level previously above their pay grade. For example, a pre-command captain in the intelligence section now provides analysis equivalent to that of division-level analysis by an experienced major. Staff officers can handle the increased sophistication but, because of a lack of experience, they require significantly more practice and training to become proficient in such analysis. Staffs must go through more simulation exercises and field training to become proficient. However, funds are not often provided to train junior staff officers, and time is always a precious commodity when scheduling training.

The squad leader is making decisions the platoon sergeant made in the past, and the platoon leader makes decisions a company commander made in the past. The force's quality leaders can handle these decisions, but they need more complex and frequent training events than previously provided. Leader

development must teach these leaders "how" to think, not "what" to think. This might sound easy, but it is incredibly challenging and requires the revamping of the entire military education system.

Leader Development Emphasis

During the transition to a Stryker Brigade, leader development was critical to developing agile, adaptive leaders who could function at increased levels of responsibility. Leader training and development required extensive staff effort and planning and was well worth the effort. Developing quality events is labor-intensive but critical. However, such events were the lowest priority in most conventional units. There was always something more important to accomplish that prevented leaders from participating in these extra events. Clearly the Army must have a new focus—to encourage critical thinking events that develop leaders who can think outside the box.

One training event based on the journeys of Lewis and Clark clearly developed critical thinking skills and an agile leader mindset. The SBCT conducted a leader development event for all E-7s and above to examine Lewis and Clark as agile, adaptive leaders. All activities were based on Lewis and Clark's experiences and included competitive events; physical challenges; author and senior leader lectures; senior mentor guidance; historical events; and equal opportunity discussions. All leaders were required to read an article written by an operations officer within the unit that covered the military lessons of Lewis and Clark. The event took 2 days, and junior leaders were in charge of brigade training during leaders' absence. Both cynics and enthusiasts left the event with a better understanding of what an agile leader can accomplish and the agility required of him in many situations. The exercise developed leaders, who formed strong bonds, and junior leaders managed to handle training just fine during their superiors' absence.

Training Lesson Learned

The Army has thrived for many years under the concept "train the way you will fight." Fortunately, this still holds true for the SBCTs. However, the complexity of training for today's conflicts requires a CTC-type exercise every time the unit goes to the field to train. Prophet systems, tactical UAVs, reachback capability, human intelligence, topographic products, and digital capabilities like Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade-and-Below, must be incorporated into the training scenario.

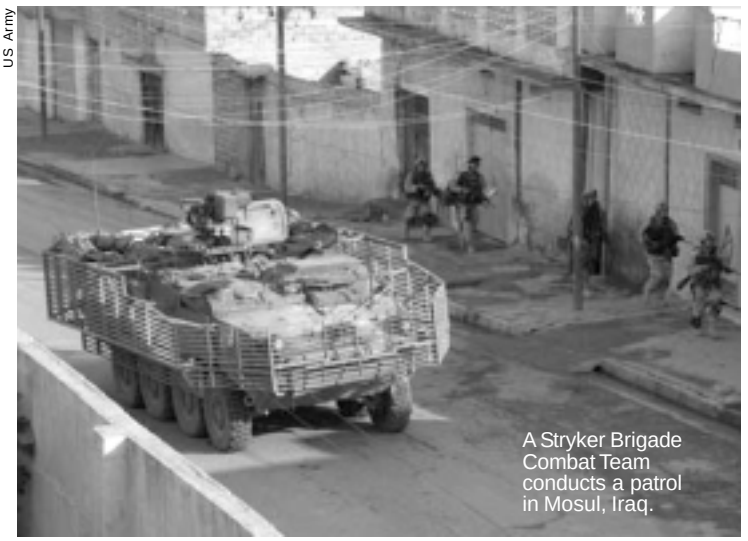
The institutional Army is not prepared to resource SBCTs for this level of training at home station. The model of doing less-complex training at home station and conducting CTC rotations every 18 months or so is out of date. The staff and leaders will never develop the level of practice required under this limited training model.

Obtaining funding for the complex events at home station is a challenge. Bureaucratic organizations like the Training Aids Support Center (TASC) have not demonstrated enough flexibility or funding support to enable high-quality training at home station. Range-control organizations show limited ability to adjust their mindset to support the warfighter. Solving this training dilemma is critical to the success of the SBCT concept. You cannot expect young leaders or staff officers to only train once or twice a year the way they will fight and still be ready for combat. The first week in Iraq, young platoon leaders were executing missions based on tactical UAV feeds, Prophet acquisitions, and staff officer analysis of critical intelligence information. Our efforts would have failed miserably if the proper level of complex training exercises had not been fully resourced.

A second challenge created by the complex events required for realistic training is the staff's ability to develop exercises and still conduct normal garrison tasks. Not enough hours exist in the day for a staff to develop and implement the training required within the brigade and to organize garrison operations. The brigade should organize in garrison as it would for combat. Garrison organization often creates stovepipes based on staff-section compartmentalization. Logistics concerns, for example, are limited to the S4 section and do not take into account the effect they have on the operational aspects of unit training. Establishing the same tactical operations centers in garrison as those established in combat and using the entire staff, rather than a staff section, can overcome this. Training and command and staff meetings in garrison are not dissimilar to battle updates or future plans briefs during combat.

Communications infrastructure can help in "training the way you fight." Rather than using E-mail, the brigade should use the same systems they use every day in the field. Reports might differ in content, but they should be in the same reporting format as tactical operations.

The Army should eliminate Cold War relics like TASCs and move to a system of contracting training exercises to allow soldiers to focus on warfighting skills, not mundane garrison tasks. A contractor could coordinate the desired training aids (multiple integrated laser engagement systems, training improvised explosive devices [IEDs], role players, simulations, training land) while soldiers work on tactical decisions and practice warfighter skills. Using contractors when needed would result in cost savings. TASC personnel are paid at full-time rates.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A Stryker Brigade Combat Team conducts a patrol in Mosul, Iraq.

Agile Mindset

The most significant change to training is the requirement to develop soldiers who display great agility on the battlefield. We must continue to train the basic building blocks, but it is now critical to train soldiers out of their comfort zone during every training event. Being agile; that is, applying an effective solution, both mentally and physically, in a rapid manner, will lead to success in complex battlespaces. Many senior leaders want to rely on checklists for every training event. The checklist has some value for events like pre-combat inspections and pre-combat checks, but once the mission is underway soldiers must rely on their agility to be successful.

Army victories in Iraq have validated the critical importance of agility on the battlefield. From complex urban environments requiring adjustments block-to-block to innovative nonlethal operations where junior leaders must bond with local leaders, the ability to be agile is essential to success.

Recent articles and observations note junior leaders' exceptional agility and adaptiveness, rightly focusing on the quick, effective decisions made by sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. Paying attention to these tremendous leaders is appropriate but does not imply that leaders above the rank of staff sergeant or captain are not agile. Combat proves the need for agility at all levels.

The ability to plan outside the box is an often talked about proposition, as evidenced in Iraq. Situational understanding of the enemy's ability to disrupt the elections in January 2005 provided an opportunity to demonstrate outside-the-box thinking. Aggressive barrier and route clearance operations and clever deception operations (rehearsals at false polling sites and information operations to mislead insurgents about the locations of actual sites) prevented the enemy from destroying the sites or killing voters on election day. The synergistic effect of leader agility and adaptiveness at all levels in the Stryker Brigade helped produce a key moment in Iraqi and U.S. Army history.

Key Training Differences

Leaders now have more information available to them, and their superiors can easily micromanage decisions because of digital enhancements within units. Such information overload affects how leaders are trained to make decisions. Many leaders will wait too long for information, and others will disregard information completely. Training on information overload and using digital systems allows leaders to react appropriately to critical information and rapidly learn how to sort out useful information. In Iraq, leaders in combat situations were able to rapidly adjust plans and take advantage of time-sensitive information to produce operations that had a devastating effect on the enemy.

The training of SBCT personnel on key warrior tasks was absolutely essential to their successful performance in combat. The challenge was how to effectively train all combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) personnel on warrior tasks and still maintain a functioning unit. The train-the-trainer concept worked extremely well and produced more lethal CS and CSS elements throughout the brigade. Key CS and CSS noncommissioned officers, trained in basic and advanced marksmanship courses, combatives, and other warrior skills, trained their soldiers effectively as the training and support schedule permitted.

Company commanders in SBCT-like organizations have additional challenges with the combined arms structure. In mobile gun system platoons and field artillery units organic to the company-level, the commander is required to develop new training plans. No course or training plan external to the unit exists for developing these critical skills. Commanders also have other unique training requirements, such as squad-designated marksmen, sniper, and digital skills.

Infantry battalion and artillery and cavalry commanders required extensive coaching as well. Initially, it might make sense to consolidate training until soldiers develop more proficiency at unique skills. In Iraq, such training was incredibly valuable when the SBCT deployed to combat operations and began fighting extensive battles immediately on arrival, and it helped young commanders when Abrams tanks

and Bradley Fighting Vehicles joined the SBCT for portions of the fight.

SBCT-like organizations must rely extensively on simulations and virtual training. There is simply not enough time or resources to become proficient at required skills without using simulations and virtual training to learn and maintain proficiency in basic skills. The most effective simulation training conducted before deployment was the simulation of actual combat operations. A link at the simulation center enabled the brigade to receive the same guidance as units in combat. They could then work through the military decisionmaking process (MDMP) to produce a plan. Developing such a plan and comparing it to that of the unit in combat was quite valuable. In fact, one mission planned at home station was executed in a similar manner in combat. Commanders jokingly asked if it was a simulation or actual combat. The mission was a total success.

MDMP Modifications

Throughout Transformation, the brigade developed an abbreviated planning process for the combat environment it faced but still adhered to MDMP methodology. The Stryker Brigade modified the MDMP to use directed courses of action (COAs) that allowed collaboration with subordinate units and maximum staff input. However, the MDMP cannot be abbreviated unless the entire process is fully understood and inculcated. Constant repetition and use in peacetime training allows the staff to eventually create MDMP abbreviations and determine ways to decrease planning time while maintaining efficiency and thoroughness.

The first effective modification to MDMP was using an individual to portray the enemy forces' plans and actions. Rather than using the intelligence officer, the unit selected a soldier known for outside-the-box thinking to portray realistic enemy COAs reflecting an enemy's devious thinking and replicating his perspective. The unit called the soldier the "devious bastard." The devious bastard developed events that became the activities the staff used in war games.

The second effective modification to MDMP was using a crisis-action tool developed during Transformation. Taking the directed COA in the planning process, before wargaming the plan, the staff conducted an event called "intentional failure." Staff officers were asked why the plan would fail and given the opportunity to express their reasons why. Informing the staff that the directed COA has failed takes the pressure off the staff officer to tell the commander the plan is not effective. This method also requires the staff to analyze the COA and identify its weaknesses before the war game begins. The staff captures weaknesses through the intentional-failure process then addresses each weakness during the war game. The staff also identifies and resolves potential weaknesses. The plan has buy-in from the entire staff, even though it was a directed COA.

Using these two modifications, the brigade was able to develop solid plans for subordinate units in numerous operations, some as complex as safeguarding elections for 5 million people and some as simple as a series of offensive actions. The process resulted in effective plans produced in a timely manner that enabled the SBCT to fight effectively against the enemy.

Institutional Changes

Throughout the 2-year conversion to a Stryker Brigade, the toughest part of Transformation was fighting an inflexible bureaucratic system. The bureaucracy's first solution to every institutional problem was to develop a temporary fix, which seemed appealing at first. It was soon realized, however, that the temporary solution did not change the permanent bureaucratic mindset and would not help follow-on units overcome the same institutional challenges. No sacred cows exist in any system. The installation must devote resources and energy to identifying problem areas. This might sound easy, but in overworked and underresourced organizations the last thing people want to hear is that they will have to do extra work to fix problems affecting a transforming unit.

One example of this phenomenon was the drawing of ammunition by SBCT battalions. The installation insisted the units draw ammunition as usual and described standard procedures. In the past, battalions drew their own ammunition when they obtained a support platoon trained for this critical task, but SBCTs do not have support platoons. When they fight, brigade support battalions (BSBs) draw all their ammunition because their soldiers have the special skills to perform the task.

Creating an out-of-hide support platoon was a quick solution to obtaining training ammunition. Drawing ammunition is a difficult task during a full-time mission; it is even more difficult when it is an extra duty for an infantry platoon. Another solution was a temporary memorandum of agreement to enable the BSB to draw the ammunition. Only after a year of working with the system was the BSB allowed to draw ammunition to train soldiers the way they would fight, which is one of many bureaucratic roadblocks that required incredible staff energy to overcome. Given the brigade's other critical training and development Transformation tasks, this added up to a staff that could not get its work done properly.

The Army should establish a board to work such Transformation issues and help each transforming unit. To enable a more effective fighting force, the board could work to ensure Transformation occurs by units and installations. The biggest challenges faced were organizations that had grown too powerful on their installations because of longevity. The Installation Management Agency that now controls the most important training enablers on installations is designed for cost efficiency, not necessarily to provide realistic training. TASC has great intentions, but it is not designed to react rapidly to changing enemy tactics and strategy. If you want a Soviet vehicle mockup, there is no problem, but it is next to impossible to get a training IED or a nontactical vehicle to portray today's enemy force.

Range Control, another installation agency that needs significant revamping, has excellent intentions, but it is so bureaucratic and risk-averse that because of safety restraints civilian personnel are determining how live fires can be executed. The last time I checked, these civilians were not on the battlefield with junior leaders. Military leaders must be able to determine training needs and practice effective risk management in order to conduct realistic live-fire operations. Range Control should become range support and help warfighters prepare for combat.

Doctrine is an essential guide, but doctrine cannot keep up with changes in this information-rich world. The SBCTs are a great example of this. The doctrine developed and rigorously worked for the first year required extensive modification after the first CTC rotation. By the second, third, and fourth rotations, the doctrine was essentially worthless. With the entire focus of the Army on the SBCTs, Army doctrine writers were unable to develop and sustain effective doctrine. Developing effective tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) that are rapidly vetted and change with the evolving battlefield would help. A system to allow collaboration and sharing of ideas between deployed, deploying, and training units—the Battle Command Knowledge System (BCKS)—clearly represents doctrine for the future. Branch schools and the Center for Army Lessons Learned should have Internet connections with units and share information and TTPs, which would enable units to train, prepare, and fight effectively.

How to Transform

We have the opportunity to transform the Army and use SBCT lessons to keep units of action (UAs) and the Future Force from facing traditional frustrations. Key areas to address are—

- Determining how to give brigade-and-below staffs and commanders time to train the way they will fight, which might involve contracting out some requirements and reducing administrative requirements in such regulations as Army Regulation 350-1, *Army Training and Education* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 9 April 2003) to empower leaders to concentrate on warfighting.
- Transforming the Army military school system to ensure leaders at all levels can perform one level up from their current rank and to instill an agile, adaptive training mindset.
- Building a bridge between the institutional and operational sides of the Army to ensure units are prepared to effectively fight wars and function during peacetime, not the other way around.
- Supporting the BCKS initiative that encourages exchanges of information between units and uses technology to improve warfighter capabilities.
- Giving brigade and battalion commanders freedom to improve training by establishing a fund to stimulate idea development to improve realism and capture and exploit successful ideas and equipment.
- Expediting changes within the institutional side of the Army that support the warfighter and ensure training is truly realistic to establish a warrior ethos for all institutions that support training soldiers.

We are at an amazing crossroads in the history of the Army. Transformation has created effective fighting forces with successful fighting capabilities in a lethal, rapidly deployable force that can arrive ready to fight in any situation, but we must not let success prevent us from capturing the critical lessons learned in the process.

SBCTs, UAs, and the Future Force must use past experience to improve the process. To remain the best Army in the world, we must continue to identify successes and failures to create the most agile, lethal organization possible to fight the Nation's battles effectively. ***MR***

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